

Parking Commission Fiscal Year 2002

The responsibility of the Parking Commission is to help oversee the planning, management and operation of a coordinated, self-supporting parking system in the Town center. It acts in an advisory capacity to recommend action to be taken by Town Manager or the Select Board on parking matters. It tries to be sensitive to the concerns and needs of all those who come to the downtown for goods or services, or who live there.

The third year of the parking permit system went smoothly, providing long-term parking for those working and living in the center of town, while freeing up parking on the main streets and in the center lots for people coming downtown. Because of the added pressure for parking spaces during the construction of the garage, more spaces were temporarily added in the late fall in the center of Spring Street where it crosses the Common. These were removed in May as the Farmer's Market opened, but additional spaces were gained in this area by the redesign of spaces at the curbs.

A number of car owners had failed to pay fines for more than five parking violations, in spite of having been "booted" with the Denver Boot, and repeated such violations thereafter. Therefore, the Commission recommended and the Select Board voted to charge \$25 to remove the boot the first time and to add an additional \$25 penalty to each additional fine for subsequent boot removals.

In a 3 to 2 vote, the Commission supported an article on the Annual Town Meeting warrant to grant a 40-foot easement on the east side of the Amity Street Parking Lot for the Amherst Cinema Project. This was done with the understanding that the Commission be kept informed of the plan as it develops and that the Amherst Cinema Center Board participate in further discussions about parking in that area. The article was approved.

As the garage in Boltwood Walk neared completion, its operation and management were discussed. The Merchants Subcommittee of the Chamber of Commerce presented the results of a questionnaire sent to their members about hours of operation of the garage and possible 24-hour rental spaces in the lower level. In March, the Select Board approved the recommendations of the Commission. These included that parking be enforced seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. at 40 cents/hour with a limit of 4 hours. The rental of 25 spaces in the lower level for a year at \$100/month was also approved.

In late June, as the opening of the top level of the garage neared, the question of how deliveries should be made to Main Street businesses was examined. It was clear that a few businesses hoped once again to have deliveries in the back, but there was concern by Commission members that deliveries across the upper level of the garage posed potentially serious problems. These included conflicts between trucks and pedestrians and between trucks and cars trying to park, as well as heavy wear on the garage surface.

The whole question of how deliveries should be made in the Town center clearly requires continued, careful consideration by the Commission in the coming year. As we gain experience with the operation of the garage, the Commission will also be particularly

concerned with fine-tuning the management of the new facility in order that it serve the community to its full potential.

The work of the Commission benefited greatly from the support of Town staff. We particularly wish to thank the following for their help:

Nancy Maglione, Director of Administration and Finance and staff liaison
Iris Galarza, Parking Enforcement Supervisor
Jonathan Tucker, Senior Planner

Members serving on the Parking Commission this year were:

Sarah Fischer, Planning Board liaison
Peter Grandonico, downtown business representative
Karen Jones, Transportation and Bicycle Committee representative
Barry Roberts, Town Commercial/Relations Committee representative
Margaret Roberts, Amherst Redevelopment Authority liaison
Jean Smyser, Disability Access Advisory Committee representative
Elizabeth Trahan, at-large member

Margaret Roberts, Chair